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IMMIGRATION IN RECONSTRUCTION

BY FRANCES A. KELLOR

It is a long way from immigration to Americanization—a journey the native-born has found quite as hard to make as the foreign-born. The chief regret as one looks back over the rough road is that there should have been so little philosophy to guide us, and that the sense of racial relationships has in the face of a great world war, remained so blurred at home. Some Americans are beginning to suspect that we deal far too much in investigations and surveys, the knowledge of which we never use; that we reject far more than we have learned to use of fine and subtle contributions to American life; that we tend to impose Americanism rather than to leave people to discover its excellencies; and that our methods are machine made rather than hand or heart made.

On any other ground it is difficult to understand how America has come through this war with no clearer a national policy; and with no sounder an international programme for the races resident here than is now apparent. No reconstruction programme thus far announced includes either immigration or Americanization; no international discussion more than suggests the world-wide migration of people which will soon begin from every quarter of the earth and which will cross and recross each other's lines for many years to come.

America today faces a situation unparalleled in its history. Hundreds of thousands of immigrants are clamoring to leave its shores, held back only by passport restrictions and food scarcity abroad. Whether these men will be replaced by others is unknown. The land that once held the imagination of all wanderers is now distanced by prospective republics and by South America and Canada. America also has become the base of many embryo republics engaged in manipulating and influencing affairs in their native country.

The after the war problems of immigration are four:—To unite races in America, involving many varied racial relationships; to interest immigrants already here to remain, involving distribution, protection and education; to determine if America desires additional immigrants and upon what basis of selection, involving the manner of their rejection and of their reception and care; and to make inter-migration express America—involving equipping those who leave with the real spirit, achievement, courage and hope of America.

Is there any recognized authority in America that can state what America's attitude is on these problems? Is there a governmental, an industrial, an economic or an educational programme that can be said to cover them? Is there a united front on them so that any country interested in its own subjects here can intelligently and sincerely coöperate with America and if so, how and through what agencies? Is there any one central authority to which the cities and States can turn for guidance and inspiration so there may be some uniformity of principle as well as of procedure?

No subject is in greater need of having a definite policy and specific measures for expressing and putting into operation such a policy. In normal times the Federal responsibility, such as there is, is divided among eighteen separate bureaus in eight different departments. To this were added fourteen war emergency bodies operating through thirty-seven separate bureaus and committees—all without a central guiding principle and uncoördinated. The war has witnessed in no field a greater confusion of basic principles. The rights of free speech, of opportunity to be heard, of representation, of justice, have all been imperilled in the campaigns and action taken in the name of a one-language country, in the attitude toward a press in foreign languages, and in dealing with the property and other guaranteed rights of aliens. We shall doubtless need a restatement of the rights of men with especial reference to our immigrant fellow men before the guarantees of the Constitution are fully restored.

Taking these four fundamentals essential to a sound republic—that men shall be united; that they shall love and desire to stay in the country of their adoption and defend it; that they shall come to it attracted by its best traditions and opportunities and be guaranteed their realization; and that they shall go forth its champions and missionaries,—is there a policy or a procedure in America today that provides for

these in unmistakable terms and that challenges any infringement of its terms?

The fact remains that never have the racial and nationalistic lines in America been so tightly drawn. It has been deemed necessary in order to win this war that every possible recognition be given to the racial groups in America. There are no less than 300 national racial societies with a known registration of 42,000 local branches. There are 85 nationalistic organizations, one alone including ten nationalities—working primarily for a united and independent native country. These organizations have 1146 foreign language papers not including 483 German papers, to express their point of view and urge their programmes. Twelve thousand steamship ticket agents, of which 80% are foreign-born act as private bankers and as notaries and perform other services which intensify solidarity. The Liberty Loan Committee, to sell bonds, had to recognize these groups and create foreign language committees. Foreign language battalions were created in training camps to facilitate the training of these groups under their own leaders. The Committee on Public Information created Bureaus of Information manned by foreign language leaders, and Councils of Defense in many places created special foreign language committees. It is inevitable that deeply interested as these racial groups are in conditions in their native country that there is a tendency to split America into embryo republics based on racial lines; to reflect here as it occurs there, the mighty battle now going on between the conservative and social revolutionary forces. There is seen everywhere the counterpart here of political differences and feuds there. Old world policies promise to be very much entangled with our own political differences. Remnants of nationalities here are attempting to dictate what the countrymen shall do at home and how those governments shall be run, through the foreign language press of America and through their powerful organizations.

America has but fragmentary knowledge of what is going on or of how this will affect its economic and industrial life. It consequently has no policy for dealing with the situation. It is a war legacy that may loom large as a problem affecting many countries in its final disposition. For the moment America is content with parades and meetings and selling Liberty bonds and war savings stamps and enlisting in the Red Cross and other agencies. These contribute little to the

discovery of a unifying principle or point the way by which these races may live together in America. The entrance of America into internationalism is by no means only across the Atlantic. It is in every city in America that has a foreign-born population and of such there are 2300 communities.

We have not yet determined even the cardinal principle: Shall national action be repression or expression? The beginning of the new year will see many State legislatures attempting to deal with this situation so big in its international aspects that only confusion and racial irritation can possibly result.

I do not say that this situation creates a menace; the future racial relationships of the world are too blurred for any man to know. I do say, however, that the extent and the way in which America is to be used as a base for the manipulation of European politics in the newly-to-be-created republics as well as in the older monarchies; the relation of these embryo republics seething with influences from their native land and beset with appeals for help; and the degree to which racial solidarities develop here—are questions upon which America should have a clearly written policy and procedure. With 13,000,000 foreign-born people and one-third of its population having its roots in other lands and widely scattered over an immense territory loosely governed in many ways, America cannot afford to drift. Every nationalistic society knows where its colonies are in America, even when its headquarters are in Paris or Berne; America alone is unable to find them when it needs them. Demobilization will rescatter them and to America alone will they be temporarily lost.

There is no better proof of the racial divisions in America than the preparations being made by immigrants for leaving the country as soon as the passport regulations are lifted, the peace terms are known and food conditions abroad will permit. The estimates vary between one and three million. Whatever the number, today throughout the country men are saving money to return, ticket agents are doing a landslide business in reserving space, and steamship offices are thronged with men clamoring to go back. Strong appeals are being made to immigrants to go back and help rebuild the home land, and recognition in position and leadership are being held out. The half naked Slav in the steel mill

dreams of the day when he will help direct the affairs of his nation, when with his savings, there reckoned as wealth, he will become a leader. And he dreams not in vain. To lose a million workers upon whom America depends to fulfill her obligations to countries abroad and to hold the lines in her basic industries is no small task. To exchange them for battle scarred and tired workers requires careful adjustment. To return the man with license replaced by liberty, with the sense of destruction replaced by the sense of construction, with revolution stilled by evolution in exchange for the lawless hordes now arising in Europe is no small responsibility. To handle this vast migration of peoples with the least possible loss of manpower, of waste of savings and resources, and of stability and purpose is worthy of America's best thought and effort and it has received but a passing thought from the numerous reconstruction bodies now in session.

America has no policy as to whether it will attempt to retain them and if so what the methods will be or whether it will bid them Godspeed, adding as much as possible to their equipment to help them in the new task. Every immigrant who goes back could have been made a missionary of the American spirit, an advocate of American business, a salesman of American goods, as well as a champion of democracy. Instead, the indifference and neglect with which they have been treated has given many no real love for the American brand of Democracy. Today, allies though they are, they are being exploited by steamship ticket agents who are selling them tickets on vessels whose sailings are unknown, and no provision is being made for their care at the seaports, where they may wait days if not weeks. They will arrive on the coast with their savings, with their faces turned eastward with the hope of seeing those from whom they have not heard during the war, and America will permit them to be exploited as they leave her just as she did when they first came to her. Every such tale told on the other side dims the glory of the Americans who fought in France.

These men and women will go back because of loyalty to the suffering home country, to see what has happened, to settle up family matters, to help the home country and to work out democratic ideals of government in a country free at last. They will be men of position and leadership in their home land. It is of vital and of great significance what America gives them to take back with them; and what their

last impressions are. These depend primarily upon what their experience and life and treatment in this country have been.

This nation has no single policy which reaches all of its immigrants and which surely equips them to interpret America to their native homes; it has no official programme or organization for safeguarding them while here or of insuring a safe or sympathetic departure. It has none of the courtesy of a host; it has not the powers of a despot. If America were to decide tomorrow that she would make efforts to keep her immigrants and interest them in America, along what lines would she proceed? Americanization is the readiest answer, summed up in most people's minds by the teaching of English and the acquirement of citizenship papers. Valuable as these are as channels, they will not be enough to hold the immigrant nor to attract new ones. With the disbanding of war agencies and the taking off of war pressure, the country has still to find a unifying principle of race amalgamation and to find what it is that creates a voluntary allegiance to a new country. When the basic principles of Americanization are reached, they will not be the various campaigns for this or that thing that seems good for the moment. They will be identity of interest in the economic and social and political fields and we shall deal with questions like these:—

Can race superiority and prejudice be eliminated and all races be given recognition and an equal opportunity in America?

How can immigrants be given a land interest and a home stake to compete with the call of the soil of their native land?

How can the worker be given recognition and his talents be utilized and the discriminations in working and living conditions and handicaps be eliminated?

How can the distance between the guarantees of the Constitution and its practical application in the daily lives of men be shortened, and political ideals be fully realized?

Shall the immigrant who tries to buy a home continue to find himself the victim of a colonization scheme to sell sand flats or in the meshes of the installment plan? But one State in America now safeguards his savings in private banks.

Industrial demobilization as well as military demobilization present interesting immigration questions: Does America intend that the immigrant shall return to his colony and section and ghetto? Is the bunk-house on construction work

and the overturned box car his future home? Does he continue a *dago* and a *wop*? Is he to be discriminated against in future employment? Will the foreign-born soldier return to the same footing in his family and in his town when he lays aside his uniform?

To these and a hundred other demobilization questions which affect particularly the foreign-born in America, there is no ready answer. These, too, are questions to which the world will await an answer. America must realize that in becoming a world Power and in deciding situations abroad, she opens the door to far greater interest, accountability and influence upon her affairs at home, especially when these involve many hundreds of thousands of subjects of foreign countries. How they shall be treated may no longer be her own affair. It concerns Europe vitally and may one say as consistently as America is concerned in how Europe treats its various nationalities.

Have we emerged from this war with a real international sense which we are willing to put to the following test: Shall immigration be considered only as a labor matter as in the past or does America recognize her dependence upon other races for elements of fusion and contributions of body, mind and spirit, essential to the future development of a great people and a great country?

America will not attract immigrants upon the old terms of ideals, jobs and wages. America will have the competition of countries eager for manpower and having as much to offer. Making democracy safe for the world relieves America of its monopoly and men will be able to realize in their own lands that which they once crossed the seas to find in America. Foreign countries by anti-emigration laws and other measures will endeavor to keep their manpower, they will direct it when they can to their colonies. Canada and South America have more to offer in adventure and lands and opportunities than America. This country also faces competition with the most frugalized and disciplined people of Europe and must teach thrift and lower cost production—a course not popular with a people used to lavish expenditure. Conditions today raise new questions as to how immigration may be best selected and how much of the revolutionary Bolsheviki element can be absorbed here. It is becoming clear that the old haphazard way of interesting immigrants to come here by leaving it to the enterprise of

steamship companies, and of labor agencies, and to individuals to send for their countrymen will not suffice, if America believes that her future prosperity and power depend on not only immigration but immigration selected for her needs and satisfying her standards.

I am far from saying there has been no improvement in these conditions. Everywhere there is evidence of changing relationships. I am saying, however, that nowhere can men who are struggling with these questions find a guiding principle clearly enunciated in law and backed by authority. In Washington, Government bureaus nullify the work of each other; States contradict each other by statute, and organizations multiply, all bent upon some specific phase of work. Education lags while imposition grows; standards yield to expedients; and incentives are killed by repression. America's voice is not raised clearly against it; and few laws are enacted powerfully to counteract it. Men feeling these inequalities seek the great adventure in other lands.

America enters the international councils today with this equipment for dealing with its races in America:

An immigration law providing for the restriction or admission of aliens, based upon self-defense, governed by an economic point of view, and containing none of the broader principles of selection which the war has revealed. Will it be amended as becomes a world Power and possible member of a League of Nations, or will it remain the provincial expression of a people afraid of labor competition?

A naturalization law, whose citizenship does not protect the naturalized citizen in his native land; which imposes hardships in the name of standards, based on local geographical lines; and which is an antiquated instrument in its expression of the dignity and requirements of citizenship, as well as in its cumbersome and unstandardized methods of operation. Many injustices, like withholding the opportunity to earn a living, are committed in its name, and many a privilege is entrenched along with its democracy. Shall it be amended to give international citizenship which shall be good the world over and having but one meaning and standard at home?

State laws dealing with the most intricate questions of nationality exhibit contradictions and inequalities. In one State men were forbidden to pray in a foreign language; in another aliens may not be employed as barbers; in another

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aliens may not own a dog; in nine States men with first papers can vote. There are indications that the legislatures of 1919 will attempt to settle questions of loyalty and of freedom in their own way. Shall there be a uniform policy for States in accord with national and international agreements, with Federal aid to the States having great problems of education and assimilation, or shall we continue to confuse the world and do injustice to the alien as he passes from State to State?

We are not agreed upon whether this shall be a compulsory English language nation; and if so under what conditions other languages may be spoken and under what conditions the foreign press shall continue, and within what terms nationalistic societies may flourish. Shall we have a compulsory English language law and a clear enunciation of where we stand on these matters or shall we drift, increasing bitterness and misunderstanding in our own country and leading eventually to complication abroad?

America unconsciously permits exploitation which necessitates that foreign governments shall protect their own people here. Shall there be a law regulating the activities of private employment agencies doing an interstate business; of private bankers covering both deposits and transmission of money abroad, of colonization and land schemes involving as they do interstate transactions; of steamship ticket agents performing a variety of international services as well as selling tickets?

We now deal with immigration with little knowledge of conditions abroad. Our own official knowledge of peoples in America is based on a decennial census. The results are not ordinarily available until they are two or three years old. Is not the world moving too fast and our own country changing too rapidly to consider people as statistics? Shall we continue to do this or shall we base our selection upon the reports of experts abroad who will advise accurately and impartially of foreign conditions including movements of population, conditions of unrest, etc.? Is it not just as important to know manpower conditions and tendencies as to know trade conditions and not through self-interested and political but through scientific and non-partisan channels? Shall we find no better way of keeping in touch with the strangers in our gates than in aggregate masses of statistics several years old?

Basic Americanization, dealing with the Americaniza-

tion of environment as well as of peoples, with the native Americans as well as with the foreign-born, is in peril of being lost in the confusion of adjustments. War agencies are disbanding and there is as yet no Federal department charged with the responsibility of taking up this work, and no appropriation has been made for carrying it on. Shall the Department of the Interior, under the leadership of Secretary Lane who has shown the most profound and sympathetic understanding of the many elements involved in our racial relations, be empowered to develop and carry on this work? It would seem that if any work belongs to the Department of the Interior this is it, and that definite action should be taken to head up the work authoritatively there in a broad way.

These are but some of the questions that face America. There are others far more delicate and undefined which have hardly yet seen the light. No one person can or ought to attempt to formulate the policies and programme but somewhere in America these matters should be dealt with in a comprehensive and authoritative way, clearly, courageously and without prejudice. Otherwise we are likely to fail at home in the very things which we have set out to show Europe how to do. America will be strong abroad just in proportion as it is strong at home; its ideals will win just in the measure that they are realized at home; its ideas will prevail just in the ratio in which they reach practical results here; and its good faith will be trusted in just the measure in which each man keeps his word and sees that liberty is realized in his shop and in his home and in his neighborhood and in his courts. To depart from this belief is to fail eventually and we are likely to lose sight of the danger at home in our triumphal march abroad.

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